

## Jawahar Lal Nehru and His Myth about China

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### Abstract

*No new nation was even born in such inhospitable condition as was India in 1947. Jawaharlal had to lead such country which was torn by communalism. Partition and food shortage although he had best colleagues to help him like Vallabh Bhai Patel, B.R. Ambedkar and C. Rajgopalachari yet it was his calibre to run the biggest democracy of the world. He wanted to make India a self reliant country free from the power blocs of the world after World War II. His efforts were interrupted in 1962 when communist China whom he considered India's friend attacked India and it resulted in rout of an underprepared and poorly led. Indian army defeat was great setback for India as it was defeat of democracy by communism, it was like back stabbing by a friendly country. In India this defeat was interpreted in personal terms as that of Jawaharlal Nehru who held the office of Prime Minister at that time. This debacle nullified Nehru's all achievements. Nehru's attitude towards China was very friendly. Other than India and England the country that interested him most was China. India had cordial relations with her speculate threat of war from China as he had certain myths about true nature and purpose of China. In retrospect, it is evident that in the year between the invasion of Tibet in 1950 and the war of 1962, Jawaharlal Nehru made a series of miscalculations in his dealing with China. Thus errors were of two kinds first were personal – his officials who gave him wrong advice, second set of miscalculations were political namely, his ignorance or under estimation of the ideological dimensions of Chinese politics. Chinese attack on India was biggest shock to the India's nonalignment policy. Chinese concealed their imperialistic interest in disguise of Panchsheel principles.*

*Jawaharlal Nehru the then prime minister could not understand the tricks of China and fell into her trap. Nehru was full of appreciations about China and this was clearly visible in his writings and speeches. He had perceived China as friend but his myth was shaken in 1962. Nehru could not forget China betrayal which later on proved to be fatal, for a year and half after 1962. Nehru died of heart attack.*

*Keywords – communism, nonalignment, imperialistic, Panchsheel*

### Introduction

India always believes in the principle of peaceful coexistence as taught by her spiritual gurus and India's foreign policy never exhibited aggression towards her neighbouring countries it may be Nepal, China or Pakistan.<sup>1</sup> During Nehru's rule China occupied a special place among her neighbouring countries. The reason was genuine China and India shared so many things in common, both are the carrier of ancient civilizations. Historically India and China have cultural and economic relations for more than two thousand years. Both of them had been the strong supporter of Buddhism. Chinese travelers like Fahien, Hieun Tsang and Itsing strengthened these relations. These travelers wrote about India and accounts have been the important source of Indian history<sup>2</sup>. Both Asian countries had been partner in ancient silk trade. There was exchange of embassies during

medieval times. During World War II, Indians' sympathies were with China rather than Japan. Nehru had deep attraction, appreciation for China. In 1939 Nehru visited China and described it as memorable trip in which he wished for a closer tie between India and China. In his book 'Discovery of India' Nehru compares China favourably with Japan, in her struggle against imperialistic world as he saw China as a progressive, anti-imperialistic nation.

### **Objective of Study**

The purpose of the present paper is to understand Jawaharlal Nehru's perception about China and how did this become a ground of his foreign policy towards China. This war spoiled Nehru's reputation which he earned as nation builder, freedom fighter and international statesman. The purpose of the present paper is to trace his journey from Panchsheel to Indo-China War of 1962 from 1947 to 1967 when he served as prime minister and foreign minister of India.

### **Material and Methodology**

The sources used in writing the present paper is qualitative research basically emphasizing understanding of human behaviour of the Jawaharlal Nehru towards China. The primary material used in writing this paper is books written by Jawaharlal Nehru - Discovery of India, Glimpses of world history and reports of home ministry whereas the secondary material includes books and research paper on the concerned subject.

### **Discussion**

Communism was established in China in spite of strong opposition by U.S. in the period of cold war. At that time most of the nations of World could not dare to recognize peoples' Republic of China's status. However India under the leadership of Jawahar Lal Nehru recognized it and became one of 16<sup>th</sup> states of world to do so. It was crucial period for India itself as it had not established itself firmly at international level. India was considered as friend of Soviet Union and Pakistan as friend of U.S.A. Jawaharlal Nehru was pivot point in establishing diplomatic relations with China. Why he was so much interested in creating diplomatic relation with China when it was diplomatically isolated by most of the countries of world at that time. For this we have to study Nehru's perception of China Jawaharlal Nehru was very much fascinated by China. His book "Glimpses of World History" has as many as 135 index reference about China. She was referred as the other great country of Asia as India's old friend. Even before India's freedom Jawaharlal Nehru visited China in 1939 and described this trip memorable and himself as the great admirer of China.

In his another book the 'Discovery of India', also Nehru speaks of cultural relationship between India and China through the ages.<sup>3</sup> He writes "each country learnt something from the other, not only in the regions of thought and philosophy but also in the arts and sciences of life. Probably China was more influenced by India than India by China, which is a pity. For India could well have received with profit to herself, some of the sound commonsense of the Chinese and with aid checked her own extravagant fancies." The Chinese leader Chiang-Kai-Shek and his wife had visited India during World War II. They met Nehru also and were impressed by him, whereas Nehru described this as the event which helped to bring India out of her national shell. During World War II India's sympathy was with China against Japan. So even before being P.M. of India Nehru found China as progressive anti-imperialist. Nehru's attitude toward China remains that of an admirer while speaking on the occasion of Asian Relations Conference held in New Delhi in March-April 1947, Nehru called China as the great country to which Asia owes so much and from which so much is expected.<sup>4</sup>

As India gained freedom Nehru as P.M. and foreign minister of India also continued to give benefit of doubt to China when it attacked Tibet. Vallabhbhai Patel home minister was better judge of communist China and he even warned Nehru about the imperialistic motive of China, in his letter to Nehru after Chinese attack on Tibet. But Nehru did not expect any threat from China and he

expressed this in his visit to North East states in 1952. Moreover he believed it very difficult task to cross Tibet and Himalayas and attack India. He continued to see China as kindred soul. In a letter to his Chief Ministers in June 1952, "A variety of circumstances pull India and China towards each other in spite of differences of forms of governments."

In this environment of friendship & trust. Chou-En-Lai visited India in June 1952 and Nehru paid return visit to China in October 1954 where he was given very warm welcome. K.F. Roustamji who accompanied Nehru wrote in diary that nothing could be better than the reception given in China. Nehru was emotionally swayed by the warm welcome given to him by one million people in Beijing. Chou-En-Lai has accepted Panchsheel principles which were so dear to Nehru's heart. Acharya Kriplani opposed this he expressed, "This great doctrine was born in sin because it put the seal of our approval upon destruction of ancient nation which was associated with us spiritually and culturally." 1954-58 was period of high time of India and China's relationship. A period when Indian as well as Chinese chanted Hind-Chini bhai-bhai, Nehru felt first jolt from China when he was refused permission to visit Tibet in 1958. Now he felt China was not as progressive as he perceived. In July 1958 a map printed in China showed large part of India as part of China. Soon Indian government became aware of road built by Chinese to connect Xinjiang to Tibet which passed through an inhabited stretch of Indian land of Ladakh district. When it was protested by Delhi, Chinese premier declared McMahon line as legacy of British imperialism and not legal and suggested to retain control of territory which currently, both the countries occupied. The political asylum and moral support given to Dalailama in India after he fled China made the matter worse. The war of words escalated between the two countries, as the Indian political parties rushed to Dalailama's defence. Nehru started considering India-China tension as matter of concern but not of serious consequences as he felt no chance of India China war. Although China's growing population, homogeneity now started haunting Nehru. In such circumstances Chou-En-Lai came to New Delhi in 1960 and proposed Nehru to that Chinese claims in Western Border Aksaichin should be accepted and in lieu of this Chinese would not challenge Indian control of eastern sector. Nehru was open to consider this favourably but national pressure constraint him from doing so.

Since Chinese war started mere as clash over Himalayan border which was the main pretext for war but other issues played their role. India became independent in 1947 and China as communist in 1949, they shared the bondings of being neighbouring Asian civilization, but the bubbles of tension started with Chinese annexation of Tibet in 1959 and India's granting asylum to Dalai Lama. This was beyond the expectation of China. Moreover India followed a forward policy in which it placed out posts along the border including several north of the McMahon line. Moreover Krishna Menon the defence minister of independent India took initiative for defence research and development. Several steps were taken to increase India's capacity in production of defence equipment so that India would gradually become self sufficient in defence needs.<sup>5</sup> Moreover in the background was the dispute over sovereignty over Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh. Aksai Chin connects Chinese regions of Tibet and Xingiang China. Construction of this road and placing border posts in Aksai Chin created misunderstandings between India and China.

Nehru had ignored Burmese premier Ba Sive who had want Nehru to be cautious when dealing with Zhou. Zhou Enlai again and again purposely told Nehru that there are no border issues of China with India and Nehru believed it.

In 1954 China and India negotiated the five principles of peaceful coexistence by which two nations agreed to abide in settling their disputes. India prosecuted a frontier map which was accepted by China and slogan Hindu-Chini bhai bhai was in the air.

Although Nehru was appreciative of China but he did not believe them perhaps that's why he had instructed G. Parthasarthy. Indian envoy to China to directly report to him all the matters regarding China bypassing V.K. Krishna Menon due to his communist background. Political asylum given to

14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama by India acted as most Indo enraging moment for Mao Tse Tung. Whereas Chinese maps showing NEFA and Aksai Chin, was enraging activity for India. At the beginning of 1961, Nehru appointed B.M. Kaul as army chief, B.M. Kaul was of view based on Indian Intelligence Services and CIA that, China would not attack India.<sup>6</sup>

The two major factors for Indo-China war were India's stance on disputed border and perceived Indian subversion in Tibet. Chinese govt. wanted to punish India's this act moreover they wanted to retain the ground on which PLA forces stood in 1962 and to punish the Indians. Second reason for attack was to damage Nehru's prestige by exposing Indian weakness. The Chinese govt. also wanted to expose Nikita Khurschew's policy of supporting India against a communist country whose revolution once she supported.

China no doubt achieved its motive of retaining control of Aksai Chin. According to James Calvin of Marine Corps Command and Staff College even though China won a military victory, it lost its international image and so did Jawaharlal Nehru who lost his prestige due to this war this was just opposite to the conditions of Winston Churchill who earned worldwide reputation due to his capable leadership during world war II.

Through the first half of 1950's Nehru continued to see China as kindered soul which was progressing on road of economic progress he believed that both India and China can learn a lot from each other. Whereas Nehru was full of praise and mentioned China a lot in his books and speeches whereas his counterparts in China didn't leave behind books or essays that speak about India. Mao Tse Tung's works hardly refer to India at all.

The debacle which India faced could have been avoided according to H.V. Kamath if Nehru had not turned deaf ear to all the friendly advice of his own deputy prime minister Vallabh Bhai Patel who had alerted Nehru in 1950 about China's intension and objectives in invading Tibet. Not only Vallabhbhai Patel but Jai Prakash Narayan, Acharya Vinoba Bhave also warned Nehru of the evil intentions of China. H.V. Kamath, freedom fighter and long time parliamentarian after his visit to Indo Tibet border in 1959 advised Nehru to take stern steps against China. However Nehru did not pay any heed to these fears rather he dubbed these people as war mongers.<sup>7</sup>

Thus it was due to Nehru's supine policy that Indian soldiers were sent to fight "ill clad, ill equipped like sheep to their slaughter by Chinese dragons". Henderson Brooke of JMA report regarding 1962 into China war has also blamed Nehru for India's debacle in Indo-China war. Nehru and Krishna Menon were of firm belief that they would solve China crisis through diplomacy and that China would not dare to attack India in spite of India's forward policy of creating new posts on borders this was against army's top most officials' view who believed that Chinese would resist forcefully any such attempt.

Jawaharlal Nehru's perception about China was based on two reasons - personal - his faith in officials who gave him wrong suggestions like advising him to follow provocative policy toward forward posts. Second was his own underestimation of Chinese power and having not seen beyond Professions of internationalism and Asian solidarity. He could not understand reservations that Chinese had about McMahon line.

India, whose P.M. Nehru who was hailed as messenger of peace and opponent of aggression himself became victim of that very aggression. Jawaharlal Nehru was seen responsible for failing to anticipate Chinese attack on India. Indians viewed Indo-Chinese war as betrayal of India's attempt of establishing longstanding peace with China. The war put an end to Nehru's hopes of resurgent Asia or strong Asian Axis to counteract increasing influence of cold war blocs.

When war took place in Oct 1962 in the west the Indians resisted stoutly but in the east they were overwhelmed. Indian army was not prepare for was although Nehru outwardly declared that Indian

army is prepared for war but in fact Nehru confessed that the Indian army was not prepared for war in letter to his chief ministers dated 22<sup>nd</sup> Dec 1962.<sup>8</sup>

## Conclusion

The defeat of 1962 was a defeat of Indian army at the hands of its Chinese counterpart, it was defeat of democracy, defeat of one large nation by another. Nehru believed that India was attacked by China because China wanted to push India into the American Camp since India was following Non-alignment policy. Nehru made many miscalculations starting from invasion of Tibet by China in 1950. One he heavily relied on his officials – B.N. Mullick who advised him to follow provocative forward policy against China after 1958. Second, Krishnamanon, who as defence minister did not pay attention to properly arm the military.

Nehru didn't understand reservations of Chinese government about McMahon line. Moreover there was striking difference in the type of government of India and China. Being the head of democratic country Indian P.M. had to abide by whims of cabinet, parliament and public whereas these factors were absent in single party run government like China. he failed to understand imperialistic interest of China about which he was warned by then home minister Vallabhbhai Patel. 1962 Indo-China was shattered Nehru physically and weakened him mentally. On June 27 1963 Lata Mangeshkar sang the patriotic song 'Ae Mere Watan ke Logon...' written by Pradeep brought tears to Nehru's eyes and perhaps at that time he was reliving the betrayal of China. Indo-China war of 1962 defamed Nehru's prestige in Asia and world and he passed away with this sorrow in his heart.

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